



CHRIS CHRISTIE
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KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor



JIM RILEE
Chairman

GENE F. FEYL
Executive Director

Contacts:

Maser Consulting P.A.

Darlene Jay, Senior Project Planner
(908) 238-0900
djay@maserconsulting.com

Highlands Council

Carole Ann Dicton, Manager of Communications
(908) 879-6737 ext. 119
caroleann.dicton@highlands.state.nj.us

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High Bridge Wins Award for Sustainable Economic Development Plan

***First of its kind in the Highlands; Plan highlights potential for growth while
sustaining natural and historic assets***

CHESTER, N.J. — A Sustainable Economic Development Plan (SEDP) for the Borough of High Bridge has won a 2012 NJPO (New Jersey Planning Officials) Planning Award. The SEDP—developed by Maser Consulting P.A. of Clinton and funded by a grant from the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council—is the first of its kind to be developed within the Highlands Region and provides the Borough with guidance about how to maximize economic potential while protecting valued natural and historic resources within the community.

A professional association of planning and zoning boards throughout New Jersey, NJPO cited the plan's comprehensive nature and actionable components in its program: "The resulting document advances a number of smart growth principles; it incorporates action items and deadlines, making it a living document."

"This sustainable economic development plan allowed us to evaluate High Bridge in a different light, one that doesn't focus on zoning and land uses, but on a municipality's economic assets," says Darlene Jay, Senior Project Planner at Maser Consulting P.A. "For High Bridge we recognized that so many past economic development efforts were focused on the downtown area and didn't consider the historic sites, trail system and preserved open space as potential economic generators. There was a realization that these historic and natural sites could become destinations and in turn, bring people into the downtown."

High Bridge is located entirely within the Planning Area of the Highlands Region where conformance with the Regional Master Plan (RMP) is voluntary. One of the benefits of conformance is that a municipality or county becomes eligible for grant funding.

“The Highlands Council is thrilled to be able to support development of plans like these that provide Highlands municipalities with a roadmap to economic growth that respects important historic and natural resources in the town,” said Gene Feyl, Executive Director of the Highlands Council. “We’re delighted for High Bridge and look forward to continuing to work with them in the future.”

The SEDP concludes with a detailed action plan that is already yielding results for the municipality. High Bridge has created a [‘Economic Development Information Center’](#) page on its website where residents and businesses can learn more about existing resources and potential opportunities in the town. Much of the material in the Information Center is sourced from the SEDP. “This project has brought the various committees in the Borough together,” says Jay. “Before, they were working in silos, now they are collaborating and holding joint meetings. The SEDP has allowed the Borough to take control of its economic future and plan for economic development that will respect the Borough’s history, scale and character; three of the main reasons many residents moved to High Bridge in the first place. ”

About the Highlands Council

The Highlands Council is a 15-member appointed body tasked with implementation of the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act of 2004. The Highlands Council is advised in its actions by an Executive Director who serves as the chief administrative officer of the Council and oversees the operations of a professional staff of planners, science experts, geographic information specialists and administrative personnel, based in Chester, NJ. More information at: www.highlands.state.nj.us.

About Maser Consulting

Maser Consulting, established in 1984, is known and respected as a multi-disciplined consulting firm with a unique balance of public and private sector experience. The award winning firm employs 340 professionals through a network of thirteen regional offices and serves the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. Over its history, the firm has been recognized by NJBIZ Magazine as one of New Jersey’s Finest and has consistently ranked as one of the Top 500 Design Firms by Engineering News Record. For additional information about Maser Consulting, please call 877.627.3772 or visit www.maserconsulting.com.

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